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*LETTER*

OF

MR. S. TEACKLE WALLIS.

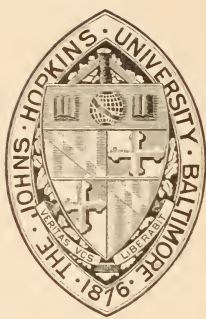
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*LETTER*

OF

MR. S. TEACKLE WALLIS

TO THE

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

OF THE

MERCHANTS' INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION.

September 24th, 1875.

BALTIMORE:

1875.

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NEW YORK, *September 24th*, 1875.

WILLIAM W. SPENCE, ESQ.,

*Chairman of Committee of the Merchants'*

*Independent Organization, Baltimore.*

*Dear Sir:*—I have already telegraphed you my respectful acceptance of the nomination for the Attorney-Generalship of Maryland, with which your organization has seen fit to honor me. That nomination having been adopted by the Citizens' Reform party in Baltimore, and officially recommended to the voters of the Republican party, by its State Convention, it is due to all concerned that I shall frankly state, in the only manner that my health permits, the considerations which have induced me to let my name be placed before the public.

My necessary absence from home has precluded that personal interchange of views between us which was to be desired. But I think that we thoroughly understand each other, on all points important to be understood. The leading one of these is, that it is no part of your purpose, or mine, by the movement in which we are engaged, to break up the Democratic party in Maryland, or to set up a new party in its stead, or in any way to hinder the legitimate triumph of the principles which it has heretofore represented. On the contrary, so far as this movement concerns the Democratic party, its work, as I understand it, is exclusively one of purification and reform—an effort to assist in making the organization and purposes of that party more worthy of its professions, and of the devotion with which the true men of Maryland upheld its principles when it cost more to do so than now. Upon this subject, however, I shall ask your leave to speak more fully as I go on.

The next point is, that it is no part of your purpose, or mine, directly or indirectly, openly or covertly, to disfranchise, pro-

scribe or interfere with the rights of any citizen because of his religious faith or the place of his nativity. I should justly offend you by alluding to this, did it for a moment occur to me that such purposes have been ascribed to you with any shadow of justification. But efforts have been made, on the hustings and through the press, to raise a false issue with you, in advance, by charging you with hostility to your Catholic brethren, and a desire and design to invade their political rights, through your present organization, or the others which have united upon your candidates. Concerning such an accusation, I do not think it becomes me, in accepting your nomination, to be silent. I am not a Catholic, and consequently have no personal interest in vindicating the rights of Catholics. Neither do I say what I am about to say, to flatter or conciliate Catholic opinion — for the demagogism which bids for Catholic votes is quite as despicable, in my eyes, as that which panders to anti-Catholic intolerance. But I was educated at a Catholic college, and am indebted for what little I am, in a great measure, to the teachings which I had, there, from clergymen of the Catholic church. From my boyhood to this hour, many of my truest and most honored friends have been members of the same communion, clerical and lay. If there is anything in their faith or lives to make a man unworthy of the privileges of an American citizen, I have never seen or heard it, or suspected it. I should therefore be false, not only to my clearest convictions of personal and political integrity and duty, but to every obligation of gratitude and manhood, if I were to lend myself to the proscription of Catholics, for their religion, in any manner or under any disguise. The whole antecedents of my life, on this point, are known to those of my fellow-citizens who know me at all, and I had hoped they would satisfy all who desire to be just, that if your organization, or any other, had contemplated a campaign of religious proscription, it would hardly have turned to me for aid. It has been kindly suggested, I am aware, in this connection, by some amiable persons, who are wiser than I, that although I am perhaps honest, on the point in question, I have been duped and hoodwinked by designing people — meaning, probably, yourselves. It is quite possible, I admit, for the best meaning persons to be made the tools of rogues. It is even possible that such a thing may occur with the nominees of a Democratic

Convention. Whether it is likely to be deemed the fact, in my case, must depend upon the public estimate of your integrity and my intelligence.

Having thus endeavored to state what your movement does not mean, as I understand it, and what I do not mean, in representing it, permit me to say, a little more definitely, what I understand that it does mean. I understand it to embody and give utterance and practical effect to the protest, hitherto made, for the most part, in private only, but made in private, everywhere, for some years past, by the best men in Maryland—against the corrupt and degrading influences which have controlled and directed, and still control and direct, the ruling politics of the State. I understand it as an effort to arrest the progress of venality and extravagance, in State and municipal legislation; to drive out and set to honest labor the drones who are billeted on so many of the public offices, in order that they may cheat, at the public expense, when they are needed at the primaries and the elections. I understand it to be your purpose to investigate fraud, and expose and punish it if you find it; to turn the public revenue from the channels of waste and misappropriation, to those of public utility—to restore your government, in fine, if you can, to its original uses, as a public servant and not a private machine. If this is your programme, as I understand it to be, I am at a loss to know how it can otherwise than challenge the sympathy and support of the public.

Since the year 1867, when the Democratic-Conservative party, with its Constitution of that date, came into power, it has been, practically, reigning without opposition. It has made or marred what it has pleased to make or mar. It has had the right to be supreme, inasmuch as it has represented a large majority of our people. But, with its right to govern, came its obligation to govern uprightly and with decency. It owed this to the minority not less than to itself, and I have no doubt that it assumed the reins of government with a determination, as a party, to do its duty to both. But it has been corrupted, as all parties and dynasties are corrupted, by excess of power. Like most absolute monarchs, it has taken to its pleasures and let its favorites prey upon the State. It has had predominance enough to make its nomination, in general, equivalent to election, and has been unscrupulous and

reckless in the choice of its nominees, as its present lists before the public will, in great part, painfully show. It has had numerical force enough to dispense with the good opinions and the ballots of the best of its voters, and it has accordingly treated their opinions with contempt. It has had official control of the elections, and when its nominations have driven voters disgusted from the polls, it has stuffed the ballot-boxes, and elected its candidates, or magnified their majorities, at its pleasure, by fraud.

These are not matters of doubt or speculation, but of fact—familiar, common fact—known well, as such, to every active politician, to every man who knows what is going on about him—known to, or within the reach of every newspaper editor and reporter in Baltimore. I do not mean to say that such things have been universal, but I do say they have been the rule and not the exception, and that in Baltimore, for years back, they have been staring every honest man in the face, and defying him. It is idle folly, or worse, to pretend to deny them. Like yourselves and thousands of members of the party, I have felt the shame of these things; but, being a member of the party, and as anxiously solicitous as any man in it for its success in the country, I have earnestly desired that it should correct them, through its own organization. Two years ago, I publicly repudiated the unauthorized association of my name with an independent organization, professing the purpose of reform. But, in so doing, I used language which I beg your permission to repeat, because it shows that the opinions which I express to-day are not the growth of the moment or suggested by my present position. What I said (August 1873) was this :

“In common with a large number of private citizens, I have lamented the injury which has been done to the good name and prospects of the Democratic-Conservative party, in many portions of the State, by corrupt practices, unworthy nominations, personal intrigues, and low counsels. I believe that no party can long retain respect or power under such demoralizing influences, and I am free to say that I do not think the Democratic-Conservative party will deserve to retain either, unless it mends its ways in these regards, and that speedily.”

The Democratic-Conservative party has not mended its ways, nor has it heeded any one's counsels; and if judged to-day, by the



influences which control its organization, it has ceased to deserve the respect which belongs to its record and its principles. Need I dwell upon the influences of which I speak? It is matter of glaring notoriety that the nominations of the Democratic party in Baltimore, and in many counties of the State, have for some years past been mainly forced upon the public, by the corrupt devices of a clique of politicians, without patriotism, without public spirit, without title, personally or politically, to the public confidence, and, for the most part, without capacity for anything but intrigue, place-hunting and plunder. It is equally notorious that the legislation of the State, in nearly all matters, and especially those which "have money in them," has been under the same corrupt and almost absolute control. There is scarcely a citizen who has gone to the Legislature, with an application for any measure of public or private utility, out of which "money" could be made by the lobby, who has not felt the controlling pressure of its hand upon him, no matter how honest and expedient the legislation he has sought to invoke. The fact is as well and as generally known, in Maryland, as the influence of Tweed was known at Albany. Equally well-known, too, whatever the ballot-boxes may have been made to show to the contrary, is the fact, that the interest taken in the elections, by intelligent and honorable Democrats, has gone on decreasing, from year to year, in consequence. They have largely ceased to take part in primary meetings, which they know to be an insolent imposture, or to trouble themselves with voting for the nominees of conventions which are packed and manipulated by trick and fraud. The indifference which comes from weariness, and an honest but mistaken sense of party fealty, have prevented them, hitherto, from giving vent to their disgust, except in the way of private denunciation. But, since the exhibition made at the late Democratic State Convention in Baltimore — not only on the floor of the Convention, but through all the disreputable scenes and orgies which surrounded it — the patience of the most patient has given way at last, and he must be blind to the signs of public feeling and opinion, who does not see, throughout the State, the evidences of active and pervading indignation. That the will of the majority of the Democratic party was absolutely over-ridden by that Convention, in its nominations, and that the Convention was deliberately packed to override it, is felt and resented, I am sure, to-day, by the mass of the Democrats of Maryland.

In such a state of facts, what is the remedy for the evil? It is childish to seek it in the spontaneous self-reformation of a "Ring," which must die its political death in the very act of reforming. Nor can relief come from protest, denunciation, lamentation and acquiescence. These have been tried, *ad nauseam*, for years, and have only made things worse. It cannot be found in the election of a ticket, placed before the people by the very combinations with which they are disgusted — for no candidates, however personally honorable, can escape the pledges, the compromises, the associations, the influences, without which their nomination could not and would not have been made. That a corrupt Ring deliberately forms and nominates a ticket; intrigues for it; forces its nomination and presses its election; without expecting to make something by its success, is too absurd to think of, unless indeed the people are pastoral enough to believe that the Ring has abdicated its sceptre in a fit of virtue and lain down to sinless dreams.

What then, I repeat, is the remedy? It is idle to talk about "the public mind" being "now at last awake." If, as heretofore, it does nothing but wake, it had as well remain asleep. Equally puerile it is, to deliver homilies about the duty of good men to go to the primaries, and send better representatives to the conventions. Good men will be cheated as often as they go; for a citizen who has to follow an honest occupation, for the bread of his family, will never be a match, in tactics, for a trickster, whose whole thought and business, in life, is political elucane. The only relief is to be found at the polls. It is to be found in the determination of men of integrity and sense, to show, at every cost, that party nomination shall no longer be equivalent to election; that they will permit no ticket whatever to be put upon them by fraud; that they will not only not vote for unworthy candidates, but will not be led away, by considerations of personal respect for individuals, from abating a public nuisance and wiping out a party disgrace. All over the country, men are rising up to the conviction that it is necessary for them to look to something better and worthier, when they vote, than party watchwords, labels and endorsements. Here in New York, the Democratic Governor of the State is triumphantly giving to that conviction all the force of manly precept and noble example. Even in Massachusetts, whole districts of Republicans have honorably manifested their disgust at the prac-

tices of their party, by flinging its nominated tickets to the winds, and pouring their numbers, for the time, into Democratic majorities. And he is weak, indeed, who supposes, that by so doing they dismember or destroy their party. It has come to this, I think, all over the country, and the next Presidential election will show it, that the best way and the surest to strengthen the hands of a party is to make them clean before the people, though present defeat and disaster be the only process of cleansing them. This, at all events, is the faith in which I abide. I am, as I have said, a member of the Democratic party, and as anxious as any other for its success in national politics. I think I am entitled to say this, because I have steadfastly supported it, for nearly twenty years; am bound to it by no obligations but those of conviction, and have served it at some sacrifice. But I care not one jot or tittle for its success, except in so far as I think it deserves success; and although I look forward, with hope and desire, to the time — not, I trust, far off — when the vote of Maryland shall swell a Democratic triumph in the nation, I confess it would only bring me humiliation to know, that Maryland had nothing better to contribute to the political regeneration of the country, than the morals and the practices which I have denounced. It is because I believe just such humiliation to be in store for us all, unless those who see it foreshadowed are prepared to do something to avert it, that I have consented, as a Democrat, to take my share of whatever party odium may attach to the effort. And, for one, I have no hesitation in confessing, that if “Democracy,” in Maryland, is to mean, hereafter, the corruption and the shame to which the party has permitted itself to be brought by the influences which now direct it, no triumph will strengthen its hold upon my poor allegiance.

Nothing, as you will bear me witness, was further from my expectation or desire, than to represent our common opinions, on this occasion, as a candidate for any office. Considerations, personal to myself, the strength of which has increased rather than grown less since I first presented them to you, render it, at this time, as unwelcome a thing as it could well be to me, to add to the responsibilities already upon me. The condition of my health precludes me, utterly, from appearing on the hustings, and indeed from undertaking any of the labors of a canvass. I have therefore

earnestly and anxiously pressed you to name some other person in my place. You have been pleased, notwithstanding, to urge my acceptance, upon grounds which I have not felt at liberty to disregard. I have never considered it the right of a citizen, for reasons of personal convenience, to refuse his services to a public movement which he believes important and approves, and which those who share his opinions believe and assure him that his intervention will materially promote. While, therefore, I am sure that you altogether overestimate the value of my co-operation, I feel that you are entitled to it, for what it may be worth. You will not misunderstand me, I am sure, as affecting the slightest insensibility to the honor you have done me, nor to that for which I am indebted to the Citizens and Republican Conventions, in their prompt and cordial acceptance of my nomination. The Attorney Generalship of Maryland is a distinguished place, and has been dignified by some of the greatest intellects which have adorned the American Bar. I could only hope, at best, to follow in their footsteps, at the farthest distance, but I should have been proud and glad, under other circumstances, to have the privilege of doing that. The personal considerations to which I have alluded, forbid me, however, to associate the present opportunity with any aspirations of my own.

It is needless for me to add, that with the convictions I have expressed, I recognize the propriety of your uniting, on your ticket, representatives of both the parties into which the country is divided. It must be conceded, I think, that you have acted with a fair regard to all things proper to be considered, in selecting two of your candidates from the Democratic ranks. I have, from time to time, differed, in political opinions, with both of the gentlemen to whom you have been pleased to assign me as a colleague, but am fortunately in antagonism in national politics with only one of them, now. The Democratic party, however, in its nominations, has so perpetually invited me to forget past differences, and has assigned to me, as associates or leaders, and required me to make friends of so many whom it once taught me to regard as the very mammon of unrighteousness, that it would not become me as a Democrat, now, to be more exclusive than it is. If I had no better reason for regarding any antagonism of opinion between my distinguished friend Mr. Harris, and myself, as otherwise disposed of,

I should certainly have the right to regard it as "sent to the rear" by superior authority in 1867, when the Democratic-Conservative party of his county invited him to represent it in the Constitutional Convention.

At this distance from home, and without any means whatever of forming a judgment of my own, I shall not pretend, even for the purposes of encouragement, to express any opinion as to your prospects of success. I am gratified to know with what unfaltering confidence those who are in a better position to judge, look forward to the election of your candidates. In many regards, you have had great and obvious success, already. Confessions of delinquency, and of the need of reform, have thus early been extorted from political assemblages, which never admitted them before. Promises of better things have been prodigally made, in quarters where, till now, it has been heresy to think that better things could be. People who have hitherto regarded "voting the ticket" as almost the first duty of man, have begun to talk, seriously, of invading its sacred precincts, and striking off the names of nominated knaves. Even if your movement should result in nothing more than thus arousing the public conscience, and giving a practical direction to its dictates, no candid man can say that it has been without noble fruit. That it may go far beyond this, and work out its own good purposes, to their thorough consummation, by its own trusted hands, I sincerely hope. I wish that I were personally able to do more in its behalf.

Renewing my acknowledgments, I am,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

S. TEACKLE WALLIS.



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S P E E C H  
O F  
S. TEACKLE WALLIS, Esq.

As Delivered at the Maryland Institute,

On Friday Evening, February 1st, 1861,

At the Meeting Held Under the following Call:

*FOR* TOWN MEETING IN FAVOR OF RESTORING THE CONSTITUTIONAL UNION OF THE STATES.—  
The citizens of Baltimore, who are in favor of restoring the Constitutional Union of the States, and who desire the position of Maryland in the existing crisis to be ascertained by a Convention of the People, are respectfully requested to attend in Mass Meeting, at the Hall of the Maryland Institute, on FRIDAY EVENING, 1st of February, proximo, at 7½ o'clock.

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*Corrected from the Report for the Daily Exchange.*

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S. TEACKLE WALLIS, Esq., who was greeted with loud and prolonged applause, said:

*My Friends and Fellow-citizens* :—I think my friend who has just taken his seat, (Mr. McLane,) has apologized to you, with great injustice to himself, for the desultory manner, as he called it, in which he has discussed the questions presented to you by the resolutions. I confess that in rising to succeed him, I am greatly embarrassed by the eloquent fulness with which he has addressed those questions to your consideration. I feel too, fellow-citizens, that the reasoning involved in the issues before you is almost exhausted by the simple statement of the propositions which the resolutions themselves, announce. The unanimity with which those resolutions have been greeted, demonstrates that both they and their reasoning have gone home already to your hearts and judgments, (applause,) and there is, therefore, little left for any man who speaks to you, but to echo with a feeble voice, the sentiments which you have already spoken with a loud one. (Applause.)

But, my fellow-citizens, I have a feeling in addressing you this evening, which overcomes all consciousness of embarrassment, and that is the feeling of 'intense, personal indignation at the position in which I am compelled to stand before you, and in which you are here listening to what any of us may have to say to you. (Applause.) The Governor of the State of Maryland, who would have been at best your servant, if he had been chosen by your suffrages—"That's so," and applause)—but who was not chosen by your suffrages and yet insists on being your master—has given it to be understood, that those who do not agree with him in thinking it the bounden duty of Maryland to be voiceless and motionless in this great crisis of the Republic—you and I and every honorable and patriotic gentleman around me—are but a horde of disorganizers and disunionists—not fit to be heard upon the question of saving your country and mine. (Applause.)

Not merely by his illegal and unconstitutional course has he condemned us to silence and helplessness; not only has he held us up to public and private denunciation as foes to the Union—weakening the confidence of brother in brother, and poisoning with suspicion the relations of friendship and good citizenship among us—but he has permitted the Governor of Pennsylvania, in an official letter, unrebuked, to insult us, citizens of Maryland, by charging that those of us who advocated the call of the Legislature were seeking to "swerve" him—the Governor of Maryland—"from the path of duty." (Applause.) Speaking for myself, and for the friends whose sentiments I know, and in whose action I have shared, I pronounce the imputation false—whether it be official or unofficial—whether it come from the Governor of Pennsylvania, or from the Governor of Maryland, or the clique behind him. I say it is an imputation which the people of this meeting, of this city, and of this State, if they respect themselves, should resist and denounce. (Great applause.)

Not love this Union! In the name of the God who gave it to us, what higher stake has the Governor of Maryland in it than you or I? (Applause.) Who kindled a heart in his bosom, to beat in truer or more fervent and grateful sympathy, than yours or mine, with all the glories which this Union has brought us—with its countless blessings and its magnificent hopes? Is it that the Governor and his counsellors understand these things better than we? Do they mean to tell us that, like the friends of holy Job, "they are the people, and wisdom shall die with them?" (Laughter and applause.)

My fellow-citizens, I was taught, from my childhood, to love and cherish the Union, and there is not a reflection or conviction of my



manhood that has not warmed and strengthened my devotion to it, and heightened my zeal for its perpetuation. When I was called upon, during the last Presidential canvass, to choose between Mr. Breckinridge and Mr. Bell—notwithstanding the preference which I entertained for the former gentleman, because of his peculiar position in regard to the constitutional questions of the day—I was chiefly and especially led to his support by the conviction (as I more than once publicly stated,) that the electoral vote of Maryland, rendered in his behalf, would place her side by side with her Southern sisters, in a position to counsel peace and moderation, and keep unbroken the blessed bonds in which our fathers bound us together. (Applause.)

It was suggested here during that canvass, as we all know, in public speeches, by gentlemen who claim to represent us in Congress, that there was no reasonable apprehension of disunion—that the threats of the South were all bluster, and would amount to nothing when the time came. It was manifest, nevertheless, to those who looked at the past and the future with the calmer and juster eyes of statesmanship, that an issue had for a long time been approaching which might at any moment be precipitated upon the country, and that unless the fanaticism of the North should cease its aggression, and demagogues, not of the North, should cease to play into its hands, the point of resistance must soon be reached, and the question of Union or Disunion be met and settled forever. To suppose that it could be evaded or ignored was simple folly. To hope for the maintenance of the Union, without removing the causes which were daily converting into hatred and alienation the brotherly feeling on which the Union is based—and without which it can never stand, and will not be worth preserving—was equally futile.

As one of the humblest of those to whom the future presented this threatening aspect, I could not resist the conviction, that there was but one hope of relief before us—in case good feeling should be powerless, and the point of conflict should be reached—and that was, for all the States whose institutions and rights were in peril, and who desired to maintain the Union and the Constitution, to unite in one phalanx, and with one voice to say to the aggressors—"Here is the Rubicon—you shall not pass it!" (Applause.) And, my fellow-citizens, as surely as you live and I live, if even the border States alone of this Union, two months ago—with Maryland in their midst, speaking for herself, and her great stake in the Republic—had taken that manly ground, moderately and calmly—without threats and without insult, but with fixed and immovable resolution—the point would have been gained, the

appeal would have been responded to, the wrongs would have been righted, the agitators would have been silenced, the crisis of the Republic would have been over, with all its sorrows and dangers, and the places of industry and labor and happiness, now desolate, would be blossoming like the rose. (Great applause.) Over the waves of fraternal discord, the people of these central commonwealths had only to stretch forth their hands, and the divided waters would have been a wall to them on their right hand and on their left, and they could have walked dry-shod through the midst, with the Union and the Constitution. (Applause.) It was the high destiny of working this great and glorious good that I, for one, would have had Maryland win for herself. It was for this that I would have had her lift herself from the criminal supineness in which she has lain, and which, until of late, the Border States have too far shared with her. But Mr. Hicks has willed it otherwise, and it has come to this, in the order of Providence, that since this crisis has been upon us, there has been no State of Maryland, but Mr. Hicks and the clique around and behind him. (Laughter.)

And even now, at this present, and anxious, and almost despairing moment, when the Union is well nigh in the throes of its dissolution, and Virginia has called together a council of her sisters, to save it, if they may, in its last hour—even now, the people of Maryland have no voice of their own, wherewith to speak in its behalf. The representatives who stand in her place in that council, speak neither your voice, nor my voice, and have authority to represent nobody but Governor Hicks and themselves. (Great applause.) Nay, I am wrong. They do represent something more than a mere absence of authority. There yet linger in this Hall the echoes of the speech which was made here, not long since, by my able and venerated friend—the Honorable Reverdy Johnson, now one of the Commissioners—the conciliatory burden of which was a legal argument, to show that the people of the seceding States were traitors, and might be punished for their treason. In mingled echoes come back to us, also, the suggestions of the address which my eloquent friend, Mr. Bradford, another of the Commissioners, delivered at the same time, and in which he told the “friends of the Union,” that in considering the solemn issues which divide the nation, they ought to concentrate their efforts upon the open revolutionists of the South, and not waste their strength upon the Northern aggressor as the first wrong-doer! With these ideas of what is demanded for fraternal reconciliation—for the healing of wounds, and the re-establishment of peace among brethren on the basis of right—I regret to believe that the distinguished gentlemen whom I have named do represent pos-

itive opinions, which are utterly hostile to the rooted and solemn convictions of the good people of this Commonwealth. I speak with all the respect and consideration due to their high character and talents, and with all loyalty to personal friendship. If, by their efforts and influence, they can save this Union, or aid in saving it, as it has been to us heretofore and ought to be forever, there will not rise to heaven a prayer of thankfulness more earnest and unqualified than mine. Be the result of their mission, nevertheless, what it may, it is due to ourselves and our rights to declare, that the act which has given them their places is a gross official usurpation. (Applause.)

In commenting thus far upon the action of the Governor of Maryland, I have dealt only with generalities. I desire to do him no injustice, and I am prepared to verify what I have said and mean to say, and what has been said by my distinguished friend, (Mr. McLane,) in regard to the course of Governor Hicks, by reference to his own published letters and addresses. I hold in my hand his various and progressive contributions to constitutional literature and jurisprudence—(laughter)—“which—pardon me—I do not mean to read.” The starting-point in Dorset County, from which he brought the rudiments, is very far removed, I assure you, from the point which he has attained in his communication to the Commissioner from Alabama. Let me invite your attention for a moment to the progress of his ideas.

On the 27th of November, 1860, Governor Hicks addressed a letter to the Honorable Thomas G. Pratt, and other gentlemen, who prayed him to exercise his powers and discharge his duty, by calling an extra session of the Legislature. He declined to comply with their solicitations on the following grounds:

“I cannot but believe that the convening of the Legislature in extra session at this time, would only have the effect of increasing and reviving the excitement now pervading the country, and now apparently on the decline. It would at once be heralded by the sensitive newspapers and alarmists, throughout the country as evidence that Maryland had abandoned all hope of the Union, and was preparing to join the traitors to destroy it.” \* \* \* \* \*

“You, gentlemen, favor an extra session only because of the importance of the present crisis; but there are others who think of their own interests rather than those of the State, who would be found seeking to monopolize the valuable time of the body in furthering schemes of personal advantage, which can well afford to await the meeting at the regular session.”

Nevertheless, he said that “the wishes of the people should certainly

"be respected in this matter," and after insisting on the propriety of waiting until we should "hear from the National Executive," from "the other Border Slave States," and from "the congregated wisdom of Congress," he declared, "I shall hold myself ready to act promptly, when I shall believe the honor and safety of Maryland require me to act in the premises." Time wore on. The National Executive had been heard from, and, it seems, without much consolation, for the Governor had waxed nigh to being a "secessionist." On the 6th of December, he addressed a letter to Captain John Contee, of Prince George's, which stepped, as it seems to me, far over the boundaries of what he now supposes to be treason.

"If the Union must be dissolved," he says, "let it be done calmly, deliberately, and *after full reflection on the part of a united South.*"

He then discusses the Personal Liberty Laws, and proceeds to declare, that

"These laws should be repealed at once, and the rights of the South guaranteed by the Constitution, should be respected and enforced. *After allowing a reasonable time for action on the part of the Northern States, if they shall neglect or refuse to observe the plain requirements of the Constitution, then, in my judgment, we shall be fully warranted in demanding a division of the country.*

"We shall have done our duty to the Constitution, to the memory of our fathers, to ourselves and posterity, and the *South can honorably take such steps as patriotism and honor may demand, either in or out of the Union.*"

In conclusion, he adds: "*I shall be the last one to object to a withdrawal of our State from a Confederacy that denies to us the enjoyment of our undoubted rights; but believing that neither her honor nor interests will suffer by a proper and just delay I cannot assist in placing her in a position from which we may hereafter wish to recede. When she moves in the matter, I wish it to be side by side with Virginia—our nearest neighbor—Kentucky and Tennessee.*"

If all this be not rank "secession," as the Governor now understands it, I cannot understand him. I do solemnly pronounce it treason, for which he ought certainly to be hanged—(laughter and applause) according to his doctrines, I beg you to understand me—not according to mine. But whether it be treason or not, I ask you emphatically to note the sentiments declared, from the executive chamber. I ask you to bear witness from the Governor's own unequivocal, and I trust conscientious language, that on the 6th of December he called for the action of "a united South;" that he recognised the right of the South to "demand a division of the country," if its constitutional guarantees

were not protected, and to act "either in or out of the Union;" and that he declared he would be "the last man to object to the withdrawal of our State" from the Union, in such a contingency. All that he asked for was "reasonable" delay—all that he claimed for Maryland, was that she should be "side by side with Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee." Time still went on. Upon the 9th of December, it became the duty of Governor Hicks, to respond to the communication addressed him by a commissioner from Mississippi. Again his plea was only "that time be given, and opportunity afforded for a fair and honorable adjustment." About the course to be adopted, in case that adjustment could not be made, he had neither doubt nor difficulty. "Fraternal concert with the other Border States" was still his alternative. Here is his language:

*"Whatever powers I may have I shall use only after full consultation, and in fraternal concert with the other Border States, since we, and they, in the event of any dismemberment of the Union will suffer more than all others combined."*

*"I am now in correspondence with the Governors of those States, and I await with solicitude for the indications of the course to be pursued by them. When this is made known to me I shall be ready to take such steps as our duty and interest shall demand, and I do not doubt the people of Maryland are ready to go with the people of those States for weal or woe."*

And he added—"I fully agree with all that you have said as to the necessity for protection to the rights of the South; and my sympathies are entirely with the gallant people of Mississippi who stand ready to resist any infringement of those rights. But I earnestly hope they will act with prudence as well as with courage."

On the 3d of January, 1861, being pressed by a majority of the Senators of Maryland to call the Legislature together, he published an address to the people, in which he protested and enlarged upon his own patriotism in refusing to convoke it; denounced the motives and principles of "the men embarked in the scheme" of calling it together: charged the existence of a conspiracy to capture the Capitol and the federal archives, which, he intimated, was at the bottom of the movement he was resisting; and endeavored to rally the citizens of the State around himself and his policy, by every appeal to their fears, their sympathies, their credulity and their prejudices. Yet even in this, the most elaborate and passionate of his efforts, he did not venture to desert the plan of consultation and united action with the Slave States of the Border.

"Believing," he declares, "that the *interests of Maryland were bound up with those of the Border Slaveholding States, I have been engaged, for months past, in a full interchange of views with the Governors of Virginia, Ken-*

*"tucky, Tennessee and Missouri, with a view to concerted action upon our part. These consultations, which are still in progress, I feel justified in saying, have resulted in good; so that when the proper time for action arrives, these sister States, bound up in a common destiny, will, I trust, be prepared to act together."*

And, he adds, with increasing emphasis:

*"I firmly believe that the salvation of the Union depends upon the Border Slave States. Without their aid, the Cotton States could never command the influence and credit and men essential to their existence as a nation. Without them the Northern half of the Republic would be shorn of its power and influence. Within the Union, I firmly believe we can secure guarantees for our protection, which will remove these distressing causes of irritation."*

*"If we find hereafter that the North shall, after due deliberation, refuse to give them, we will, in a united body, demand and receive a fair division of the national domain."*

On January 12th, a committee of most respectable gentlemen, deputed by a conference from all portions of the State, and held in the Law Buildings of this city, had an interview with the Governor. The Conference had deferred to his declared objections to the convocation of the Legislature, and the committee were instructed merely to solicit, that he would issue his proclamation inviting the people to determine, by their ballots, whether they desired a Convention to be called. In case of an affirmative response to the appeal, the Governor was requested to designate a day for the election of members to the contemplated body. The Governor declined. He still desired delay. "He preferred waiting" (according to the announcement in the *Baltimore American*) "until Mr. Crittenden's compromise resolutions should be finally acted upon, before taking any decisive step upon the subject at issue." On the 24th of January, to the astonishment of every body, except those initiated in the mystery, there appeared in the *Annapolis Republican*, a copy of a letter bearing date as far back as the 8th of that month, and addressed to the Hon. J. L. Corry, Commissioner of Alabama, wherein every previous suggestion of the Governor, and of everybody else, looking to "a united South," a "concert of the Border States," "a united body," a position "side by side with Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky," an association "for weal or woe," with those States, or any other States, "in a common destiny," is utterly repudiated and denounced, as a flagrant violation of the Constitution—a step to which "the people of Maryland will never consent!" Such "fraternal concert" for any purpose or in any shape, is not (he says) for an instant to be tolerated. Let us hear



the language in which this doctrine is proclaimed, from the same lips by which the people of Maryland were so often assured, as I have shown you, that the identical course, now so bitterly denounced, was nearest the Governor's heart. He speaks thus,

"I cannot see how, while the Constitutional prohibition stands against "compacts or agreements between any of the States, any "mutual league" "can be had, even between those whose hopes and hazards are alike. "And if this prohibition has been judicially declared to include 'every "agreement, written or verbal, formal or informal, positive or implied, "by the mutual understanding of the parties,' then I am unable to "imagine how any league or covenant or understanding whatever, unauthorized or unapproved by Congress, even though it should be in "furtherance of the laws and for strengthening the Confederacy, can "be otherwise than in plain violation of the clearest provisions of the "supreme law of the land."

Instead, therefore, of hearkening to any such treason—instead of proceeding with the Border States "in a united body, to demand and receive a division of the national domain;" instead of "demanding a division of the country;" instead of having our Governor to lead us, "in fraternal concert with the other Border States," in the ultimate vindication of our common rights and "common destiny"—instead of "concerted action, upon our part," with the people with whom we are "ready to go"—we are to do what? Abide by the action of Congress!

"The Congress of the United States," says the Governor, "offers the only mode, authorized by the Constitution, for consultation and advisement among the several States. . To the Congress I still look with confidence for such enactments as shall secure our just and equal rights, and shall satisfy all except those who are determined to be satisfied with nothing but revolution, and the hopes that are to arise to them from anarchy and confusion."

Fellow-citizens! does not this suffice? Is it not as plain as fact and argument can make it, that the people of Maryland have been deluded and deceived? Is it not manifest that they have been entertained and kept quiet by assurances of a desire and a purpose to unite them, in the vindication of their position, with the Border States, should the disruption of the Union be inevitable, and that all those assurances were hollow, and are now to be repudiated and abjured? Is it not demonstrated that the States, which it was declared would be "prepared to act together," are not to be allowed "to act together," if Mr. Hicks can prevent it? The result of the whole is perfectly palpable. It is intended that Maryland shall be kept inert and silent under one pretext or another, until the inauguration of Mr. Lincoln, and then her people are to be rallied to his support, as the representative of the govern-

ment and the Union, and their love and devotion to the Union are to be their lure and decoy into the practical support of the Republican party. (Cries of "Never, never.") I welcome the declaration, not only as your sentiment, but as the feeling of the whole people of the State. The scheme nevertheless is as plain as the sunshine—as transparent as the moonlight. Happily it is a bargain which it takes two to make, and which you can thwart. (Applause.)

In attempting to expose it, I have had no desire to throw one single spark of excitement into a controversy which the conduct of the Governor and his partisans has rendered exciting enough. But as a citizen and a gentleman—involved with whole masses of the good people of this State, in an imputation of treason and perfidy to that sacred constitutional Union, which I cherish more than all things else, in my relations, as a patriot, to my country—made too, in common with those whose opinions are like my own, the subject of insolent reproach to the Executive of my State, by the sympathizing Executive of another, I have felt it due to all of us that the course of Mr. Hicks should be made so plain, as that he who runs may read it. (Applause.) And I do solemnly declare, that I have never entertained an opinion, nor do I understand the resolutions before you as asserting a doctrine, in regard to the course to be pursued by Maryland in the contingency of a dismemberment of the Union, which goes one step beyond the doctrines of Governor Hicks upon the same subject, so repeatedly and ardently proclaimed by him, and now, at the last, repudiated.

A word upon another branch of the same subject. The Constitution authorizes, and in my judgment directs, the Governor to assemble the Legislature upon extraordinary occasions. Even upon his own theory he is bound to exercise that power now; for whatever his previous opinions may have been, the very fact that he has sent commissioners to Washington, for the purposes set forth in the invitation of Virginia, is a concession that one of the most extraordinary occasions which could shake an empire has startled and affrighted this Republic. Nevertheless, he will not assemble the Legislature. The stars have said it. He has assumed, and his friends and advocates have assumed with him that its convocation is not desired for any other purpose than to fling this State forth, madly from its sphere. He and they contemplate, or profess to contemplate, nothing but secession, and secession in the wildest shape, and for the most corrupt and infamous purposes, as the result of the meeting of the General Assembly. Fellow-citizens—No man has a better right to know, and no one has a more incumbent obligation on him to do justice to the present Legislature of Maryland, than I have. I was before them, last winter, long and often, with friends who are around me, in the successful effort to restore, by proper legislation, the rights and order of this community. (Applause.) It is to their patriotic and conservative action, altogether, that you are indebted for the freedom with which you assemble here to-night to speak your sentiments, and for the security which will attend you to your homes when you separate. It is only because of that conservative action of theirs, on your behalf and mine, that red-handed murder no longer writes election returns



among us, for Congressmen who misrepresent us, and Governors who usurp our prerogatives. (Tremendous applause.) And I tell you, fellow-citizens, that the self-same reasons which make the Governor of Maryland distrust that Legislature, ought to be your reasons and mine for trusting it. It is natural that you and he should view with different eyes, the principles and conduct of those representatives of the people, by whose interposition we were enabled to break down the brutal despotism which made him Governor of Maryland. (Applause.) I repeat, therefore, that I have reason for confidence in that Legislature, and that the proper mode of giving utterance to the sentiments of our people, is through a convention which that Legislature shall call. If the Governor persists in refusing to give the people that legitimate and constitutional opportunity of being heard, the responsibility is on his head, and they must do the next best thing they can, by calling a convention themselves. (Great applause.)

In the presence of what crisis and what necessity do we stand, fellow-citizens? Let us look at it like men. Six States of this Confederacy have gone out from it. God knows that their departure from this Union has given me only anguish. The ringing of bells and the booming of cannon, seem to me no proper part of the demonstrations which belong to an event so sad. I feel as if every true-hearted man should bow to such a dispensation—inevitable as it might be—in the spirit with which he would follow his mother to the grave. (Sensation and applause.) But whatever be the feeling with which we regard the fact, it is a fact nevertheless. Six States have gone from among us. Call it revolution, or secession or rebellion—call it anything you please—still they have gone out of the Union, and it depends upon the result of the conference, which is about to take place in Washington, whether the remaining Slave States South and West of Maryland—the whole broad belt and border from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, and beyond—shall not go out likewise. And while this great problem of our destiny is being solved, and howsoever it may be solved, we are told that our interest and our duty—our obligations to the Republic and ourselves—require us to be silent and quiet—to surrender ourselves to Gov. Hicks, and “cling to the Union!” Cling to the Union? Cling to what? What is the Union into which Maryland entered, and to which she belongs? A great Republic, one and undivided, almost covering a continent. Where is she in that Union? A central State—the tendrils of her prosperity fastening, upon every side, to the confederated communities around her. You break that confederacy in the midst, leaving her a border province, with a foreign nation, and perhaps an enemy, beside her, and you tell her to cling to the Union still—to cling to what then exists no longer, in love or association, or peace!

Oh! but say our constitutional lawyers at Annapolis and elsewhere—the Union will not be dissolved—the States will have only seceded, and secession is unconstitutional—everything, therefore, will be as it was before, and Maryland must cling to it! Are we talking with men, or are they talking to us as children? Are we to

look at abstractions and statute-books, or are we dealing with the great and palpable, and if you please, the terrible facts of a revolution? I have heard no argument to prove to Maryland that the States which have left and may leave the Union, in fact, must still be regarded as part of it, which would not prove with equal demonstration that the United States of America are still the colonies of Great Britain. I have heard no logic that establishes the constitutional right of half the Union to call itself the Union, because it preserves the forms of the government, that would not equally prove Massachusetts to be the United States, if every other State were to leave her, provided she chose to retain the national name, and had army and navy and strength enough to enforce her pretentions by arms.

The Cotton States, then, are out of the Union. The responsibility, it is true, is on their heads—but still they have left it. The Border States to the South and West of us, unless it pleases heaven to permit a compromise, will go out also. What is the State of Maryland to do? To tell her to cling to the Union then, is to bid her cling to the North, and clinging to the North, means clinging to the Republican party. (Applause.) And this—when she knows that if the line be drawn on the Slave border, the right is on the one side and the wrong is on the other, and the Republican party is the champion of the wrong. In the olden times, when the people of Maryland acted on such questions, and had found the right, they did not doubt whither their course lay—nor did it take them three months, with a volume of correspondence, to distinguish the right from the wrong. (Applause.)

But there is a theory, as you are aware, my fellow-citizens, upon which the fact of any possible disruption of the Union is seriously challenged in argument—I mean the theory that the Federal Government may of right coerce into allegiance the States which have abandoned it. I desire to speak upon this branch of the subject, without expressing the indignation with which I think it deserves to be treated. Speaking as a lawyer, upon a subject within the range of my professional studies and reflections, and having anxiously sought to get at the truth in regard to it, without prejudice or passion, I assert the deliberate opinion—as strongly and as conscientiously entertained as any I have ever formed—that the idea of coercing a State or its people, when that State, in its corporate capacity, has declared itself out of the Union, has no color or support whatever from the Federal Constitution. Everything I have read convinces me, with equal positiveness, that any attempt to force such a principle into the Constitution, would have been utterly fatal to the possibility of its adoption. (Applause.) I challenge any man to read the records of the Convention which framed the Constitution, or search the proceedings of the State Conventions which ratified it, and deny the fact, that whenever the suggestion of coercing a State was made, or of repressing by force any revolutionary State action, the men of mark and controlling influence in those bodies denounced it as impracticable and absurd, involving of necessity the bloody and hopeless disruption of the Union they were forming. I state the proposition as one standing by itself—unconnected

with the question of the constitutionality or unconstitutionality of secession, and true in either aspect of that question. And is it not right? Does it not carry along with it every interest of civilization and humanity—every principle and theory on which our governments, both State and national, were founded?

I confess I cannot realize what gentlemen mean when they talk with sober seriousness about hanging and shooting men back into brotherhood and union with us. I do not understand their idea of perpetuating the Republic, by drenching its broken fragments with fraternal gore. Above all, I cannot comprehend the philosophy of those who, believing that secession is unconstitutional, still believe that the people of the South have been goaded to it by unconstitutional wrong, and would execute them for treason nevertheless, because they are not quite patient enough in enduring it. The Union is a great blessing and a glorious privilege, but there is no law of God or man which will uphold the doctrine of cementing it with blood, under color of maintaining a government, which rests upon two leading principles; the one, that all government is founded on the will of the governed; the other, that the doctrine of non-resistance to arbitrary power is slavish and absurd. (Applause.)

I, for one, have those who are bound to me by the closest ties of kindred and affection, in two States, whose Conventions have solemnly repealed the ordinances which bound them to the Union. There are a thousand men before me, each of whom has some close bond of friendship or of family, where the old political ties have been sundered. To say to you and to me, that it is our duty, under the Constitution we have sworn to uphold, to go among them with fire and sword, and to ravage and despoil their heritage, in order that they may love us and cleave to us hereafter, is to announce a doctrine, in support of which no government can ever raise the arm of one free man in Maryland. (Applause.)

This is not sentiment merely. It is reason, and truth, and manhood—and any theory that the Union is to be preserved by compulsion will fall to the ground, and sink in it, of its own weight. What, then, is Maryland to do if compromise should fail, and the line of actual separation be drawn along her border? It becomes her to be ready for that issue. She has a right to speak, and it is her duty and her interest to speak. Let her do it. (Applause.) Down to this time, no man is able to say with authority what her will is. The people of the North have believed her silence to be Northern sympathy, and they have resisted compromise. The people of the South have been discouraged by it, and they have precipitated action. She has not only held her own hand from the good work of mediation, but she has strengthened the hands besides, that were already too strong for the Constitution. Thank heaven, the sin of her withdrawal from the field where her labors were due, is not on your heads or mine. If ever history should write the record of the disruption of this government, the blackest of its pages will be that on which are written the names of those—whether States or men—who ought to have stood up between the living and the dead, yet did it not. Let the evil of such reproach hang over us no longer. (Applause.) Let us assemble our Convention and declare our resolves, and no longer let our destinies be shaped for us by the will and usurpation of a single man. It may be that Governor Hicks is wiser than all the

rest of the Union put together. It may be that he has sources of information, "not accessible" to anybody else. It may be that the Convention, when assembled, may represent his sentiments, not yours or mine. If it should do so—very well—I will obey. If it should not, I desire him to obey. But it is time we had insisted upon having the point finally determined. It is not only due to our independence, our interests and our patriotism, but our self-respect and self-vindication demand it. Wars and rumors of wars, conspiracies and tumults, riots and routs, have been flitting in terrible array through the Governor's imagination, convincing him that we were not fit to be trusted with our own government and our own affairs, and that it was his paramount and sacred duty to keep us quiet and attend to our business himself. I suppose he has believed in all these visions and dreams, (laughter)—at all events he has acted upon them,—and it is high time we had made up our minds to say whether they are true or false, and whether the Governor is the only man among us, in public or private station, who is honest and wise enough to be trusted with our stake in the Union or our destiny in the event of its disruption. If he is right, let the Convention say so. If we are to go to the North, let the majority so rule—if we are to be spared that journey, let us know it!

As to the questions which may come before the Convention, when it meets to deal with the great contingencies of the future, and the terms of our possible relation to a Southern Confederacy, I am only now prepared to say, that they involve much complication and embarrassment, demanding all the resources of wise and patient statesmanship. There may be difficulties in my way, which will not be in yours, and difficulties in yours, which may appear none to me. The ballot-box will settle these differences, fairly and peacefully, and only the ballot-box can so deal with them. It is as far as possible from my purpose to say anything tending to excite, but I am as certain as I am of my existence, that if the Governor of Maryland were able to carry out his plan of preventing the people from thus determining these matters for themselves, it would create domestic strife among us, as surely and as sadly as coercion elsewhere would breed civil war. By temperament, and from conviction, I am a man of peace, and I turn therefore to the pacific arbitration of the ballot-box, as our refuge from the horrors of such an alternative.

Fellow-citizens, I have finished what it has seemed to me proper to say to you. I repeat to you, so that no man may misunderstand me, that I desire, above all things, this glorious Union and Constitution to be preserved, for they are the best heritage bequeathed to us by our fathers, from whose dust every blessing of our political existence has sprung up to us. If that Union cannot be preserved by fair concession and honest and becoming compromise, I desire the State in which I was born to take her stand with the right. That it is right is reason enough, but I believe, besides, that with nations as with men, wherever right is, there every true interest is sure to be likewise. (Applause.) Whatever the decision of Maryland shall be, in that decision I shall acquiesce, for my home and my destiny are here. But one thing I am sure of, and that is, that any reconciliation that may be patched up, will be a wretched and melancholy failure, ominous of future and bloody discord, unless the question of slavery be

taken from the Congress of the United States, and the discussion of the institution and the principles which surround it, be removed forever from all political temptations. The people of the South will not—the people of Maryland never will—submit to have religion and morality manufactured for them by Massachusetts. (Laughter and applause.) We will never consent to accept Plymouth Rock as the touchstone of right and truth. (Applause.)

One word more and I have done. What I have said to you, I have said altogether as a private citizen, speaking his individual sentiments only, and desiring to represent no one but himself. I believe that on occasions of public difficulty like the present, it is the duty of every man to form his own conclusions patiently and deliberately; to express them frankly, and take the consequences. (Applause.) That done, his duty ends, and it is for the majority to settle the rest. I belong to no party. I say this, because I desire to be understood as speaking in the interests of no party, and to please none. I am no politician, and do not covet being regarded as one, for no man can be more wholly devoid than I am of political aspirations or ambition. If you believe me to be a man of truth, I ask you to believe that I mean precisely what I say. For the opinions I have expressed to-night, I claim no indulgence, unless it be such to have them dealt with as honest, whether you or the community concur with them or do not.

[Mr. Wallis took his seat amid immense applause and cries of “go on,” “go on.”]

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ON

THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY,

AND SOME OF

The Popular Errors

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CALVERT INSTITUTE.

January 24th, 1844.

By S. TEACKLE WALLIS, Esq.

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Dec 1st 1844  
Baltimore, January 27, 1844.

DEAR SIR,

The pleasure and interest with which the Managers of CALVERT INSTITUTE listened to your Lecture of the 24th ult. were such as to determine them to request a copy of it for publication.

In now making that request, we beg to couple with it the expression of our sincere admiration of the ability displayed in the Lecture, and the assurance of our gratification to find its merits so cordially appreciated by all who heard it.

Yours truly,

M. COURTNEY JENKINS,

T. PARKIN SCOTT,

*Committee on behalf of Managers Calvert Instit.*

To

S. TEACKLE WALLIS, Esq.

Baltimore, 27th January, 1844.

GENTLEMEN,

My Lecture of Wednesday evening last having been (as you are aware) written for delivery, not publication, is more unworthy, in many particulars, than I could wish, of the favorable consideration so kindly expressed in your note. I am happy, however, to place it at your disposal, and beg you to believe that I appreciate your partial courtesy.

Very truly and respectfully, yours,

S. TEACKLE WALLIS.

M. COURTNEY JENKINS, Esq.

T. PARKIN SCOTT, Esq.

*Committee, &c.*



LECTURE  
ON THE  
PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY,

AND SOME OF THE

Popular Errors which are Founded on it.

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THE poet who told us, that “the proper study of mankind is man,” would surely have been frightened from his propriety, had it entered into his imagination to conceive the extent to which, in a single century, the application of his maxim was to carry us. Few men there are, in these days, who have not a notion of their own, as to the going of things gone, and the coming of things future, and the bearing of all things past, present, and to come, upon the fortunes of the human family. To almost every one, the day in which we live affords a kind of platform, upon which a mystic thing, denominated the spirit of the age, comes forward, and like the chorus of an ancient tragedy, pronounces a mingled strain of chronicle and prophecy. Different as may be the garb this spirit wears, according to the fancy which has clothed it, there is one point upon which it seems to speak, in the same tones, to all; a point which displays the actual spirit of the age in perhaps the least equivocal of its phases—I mean its self-glorification. It is astonishing to see the comparative unanimity with which the framers of current philosophy and the guides of popular opinion unite in teaching their disciples, that the present age is the consummation of all the past, and that the spirit of progress which chiefly marks it, is destined, inevitably, to lead our race to the consummation of its perfection. I propose to examine these notions with a little closeness; to test the accuracy of the premises upon which they rest, and to see how far their promulgation is consistent with just social views, and the interest of our country, whose citizens are so often favored with them, from press and lecture-room.

An intelligent audience does not need to be reminded that, early in the last century, a new branch of study was called into existence, which now bears the imposing title of the Philosophy of History. Cultivated, towards the close of that century, and the beginning of the present, by many of the first minds in German literature, it grew to assume an important place among the elements of enlightened knowledge. Since then, it has entered extensively into the best efforts of French philosophy, and is now beginning to make itself popular in England. It must be admitted, however, that in this, as in all matters of enlarged and profound generalization, the continent is greatly in advance.

The Philosopher of History looks upon human nature as a vast science, of which the world furnishes and has furnished, in the action of nations and individuals, but a series of protracted experiments. He endeavors, and in his theory professes, to place himself upon an elevation above humanity, calmly looking down upon its movements throughout all time, as if he were beyond the sphere of its revolutions, and the influence of its gravitation. He takes mankind from their earliest recorded or imagined actions, down to the living present, tracing in their career, what seems to him to be the continuous outline of the world's life, and the progression, relation and law of the principles set forth in it. In the past and the present he finds sown the seeds of the future, and looking upon humanity as one great problem, he solves the mysteries of destiny, by applying the axioms of history to their elucidation.

It will be seen, from this faint general notion, that the duty which the Philosopher of History assumes, is one, which must task, to their utmost limit, the highest faculties of the brightest intellect. Men, of prominent abilities, have devoted years of arduous and patient labor to the illustration of the wonders of Providence, in the minutest, and, apparently, the most trivial of his works. Yet, after all those years, they have left their subjects still unexhausted, and the toil of each succeeding student has but served to open new vistas of wonder and wisdom, for still succeeding laborers to explore. The extraordinary muscular adaptations which the human hand displays—the miraculous

combinations which are involved in the organs of vision—the mysteries which still slumber, unexplained, in the nervous system—the phenomena which attend the planting, the growth, the blossoming, the reproduction of a little wayside flower—all these things have, in their turn, pointed the studies of long lifetimes, and are full of unintelligible wonders still. What then, is the interminable distance which he must travel, who begins the journey of thought with the creation of man—who strives to trace, through all the developments of human conduct—through all the countless revolutions—contradictions—conflicts—confusion of rolling ages, the ebbing and flowing of that measureless ocean, the providence of God! Ocean did I call it? Rather let it be counted as a mighty wind—which has passed over human existence—unseen—the direction and impetus whereof are to be gathered, only, from the marks of its progress which have survived through time.

Not only is the subject, in itself, a vast one—but many of the data, on which its scientific conclusions are to rest, have their basis upon very clouds. Mutable as even the face of nature is, through a succession of long ages—it is permanence itself, to the changing fate of man. Let history be as busy as she may—she is but a gatherer of fragments. She is a chronicler, that tells scarce half. The incidents of human existence—of man's national, not less than his individual career—what security have they of perpetuation—or, if they be treasured, dimly in memory, what security have they that they will be above the frailties of recollection—the metamorphosis of tradition—the chances of perversion, by ignorance or wilful falsehood? Recent travellers inform us that the honey of Mount Hymettus, in Attica, famous for its excellence in Grecian song, is still as sweetly gathered from the same fragrant thyme, as when the bards of Greece were there to taste and praise it. Nature, here, proves to us, that the poet's tale was truth. She is his witness, after two thousand years. But who shall say of the men who lived in the shadow of that classic hill, that their story, solemn, grave, eloquent as it may be, is as free from peradventure, as is that of the little insect that buzzed among their gardens? Who shall say

that their good deeds and their evil—national and individual—their political movements and the springs and principles thereof—have come down to us—all or one half of them—faithfully as they were? Who shall tell, that facts, which were but trifles, have not been made the foundation of whole historic systems—while others have gone into oblivion, lost or hidden, which would have made sunlight, all over the dark places of their individual or national progress? Over how many of the best landmarks, by which historical philosophy might have been guided, may not the sands of ages have drifted altogether? The researches of antiquarians have discovered and are discovering, yearly, in the southern portions of our own continent, traces of mighty nations, whose arts, and sciences, and civil polity, had reached, in many particulars, as high a point, as modern intellect has been able to attain. The elaborate history of Mr. Prescott, and the instructive productions of Stephens, Norman, and Mayer, have but recently placed the English reader in possession of facts, as to the former inhabitants of Mexico, which astound us by the wonders they disclose. Each succeeding step, which oriental learning takes, among the chronicles of Egypt and Asia, reveals some mighty fragment of a system, before untold of: and leaves us at sea, as to the probable extent of a social progress, which, mighty as it was, had sunk out of human memory.

While then, I do not mean, for one moment, to plunge my auditory or myself into the chaos of historical skepticism, I nevertheless submit the views to which I have adverted, in order that we may see how easily and how far the wisest may be led away from certainty, or rational probability, in their deductions, by the very wildness, or imperfection, or absence of the premises, on which they should depend.

There are other things too, besides the vastness of the subject and the incertitude of its elements, which deserve to be noticed in this connection. Generalization is always a critical business. It is one of the highest efforts of mind, and likewise among the most perilous. Viewed in one light, facts may seem the exponents of one set of principles—seen under other circumstances, a little distorted, or varied, or colored, they may be

made to uphold another. Drop one material fact from a series, and it may render the most elaborate generalization worthless. Give undue importance to one that is immaterial, and it may produce, in an opposite way, the same results precisely. Add to this too, the invariable tendency of human nature, from the days of Procrustes to the present—exemplified in all, from the son of the king on his throne, to the son of Crispin in his stall—to make the sleeper fit the bed, the foot fit the shoe, the fact fit the theory. Every speculative man has his own peculiar notions of human nature, its whence and its whither, its progress and tendency. As a rule, almost without exception, these notions form the mould, into which his generalizations are apt to run, and the bent of his mind will be, to discover a wonderful harmony, between his own preconceived opinions and the facts which history may have evolved. The fatalist and the believer in Providential interposition, the perfectionist and the doubter of human excellence, the radical and the conservative, the Christian reasoner and the skeptic, all find, or believe, or say they find food, for their antagonistical speculations and deductions, in the same facts, the same histories, the same outline of human progress.

“Such tricks hath strong imagination!”

It is no wonder then, from all these causes, that although the great men who have labored in the Philosophy of History have called it “science”—as indeed almost every thing is now called, which looks like a system—it does not yet bid fair to rival the mathematics, in the infallibility of its axioms or its solutions.

Numerous, and indeed amusing in their conflict, are the views of human nature, its course and destiny, which different minds have elicited. Throwing aside minor and more metaphysical differences, which, though interesting to the student, would be tedious in the lecturer, we will look at the conclusions merely, which have been reached. One set of theorists look upon man as having been almost perfect before his fall—and consider that the true Philosophy of History consists, in watching his steady progress back, from the day of his transgression, towards the degree of perfection which he lost. Of this theory—sustained



however by many honorable names in German literature—Frederick Schlegel is, to the American public, the chief oracle—his work having been translated and freely distributed through our country. I will not pause, now, to resist this doctrine, but will merely observe, in anticipation, as it strikes me, that if humanity has really advanced towards its lost birthright, the very trains of reasoning, which the philosopher relies on, show that it has frequently been by a system of advance, which bears a wondrous similitude to retrogradation. The same observation may justly be made, I think, upon another class of writers, who start with the idea, that man was originally a savage, and consider that philosophical history traces him from that point onward—marching ever towards ultimate perfection. This theory, likewise, in modern times, the birth of German, or perhaps Italian ingenuity, is now current in the French school—modified in its details, according to the very varying tenets, theological and metaphysical, of its particular advocates. Between the two theories thus named, it seems that History need not trouble herself to make a selection—for, if both admit that mankind are always advancing towards perfection—it matters little, in a purely human point of view, whether it is a condition they have lost, or one they never enjoyed.

Another set of philosophers boldly tell us, that the world has reached its perfection, just at this particular epoch—that the elements of progress have been exhausted—that society is at the Pillars of Hercules—with no strong hand to open them before her. This view is very pleasant, to us who are living and see it. It presents rather a sad prospect, however, to the good people, who are to come after us. By way of doing something to console posterity, a recent Westminster reviewer—commenting upon this last named theory, as advocated by Dr. Arnold—offers a new element to civilization. He admits that the Caucasian race has worked out its vein—but he sees bright hopes of human perfection hovering over the African continent. There—he contends—the proud intellect and stubborn will may not be found—but there, Christian perfection, and love, which is its essence, will be seen, hereafter, to make



their dwelling. He quotes from Dr. Channing, to show the coincident opinion of that eminent but not always philosophical reasoner—and insists, that the mixture, hereafter, of the Caucasian and African civilizations, will weave into the web of human destiny, all the golden threads that can adorn it. I cannot tell how far this view may strike you as philosophical. It seems to me, that it partakes no little of the madness, with the eyes of which

“The lover, all as frantic,  
Sees Helen’s beauty in a brow of Egypt.”

With the theory of Dr. Arnold or his reviewer, it is fair to say, that the majority of writers and thinkers do not much trouble themselves. The two great classes of which I first spoke—uniting, as I observed in the opening, upon the great principle of our progress toward perfection—comprise within their ranks the majority—the large majority of historical philosophers. Upon the mode, however, in which this perfection is to be attained, they are by no means unanimous. Some deem that intellectual discovery—scientific attainment—knowledge—will lead us to the goal. Others, and among them, a large class now stirring the waters in England—inculcate the folly of positive knowledge and scientific pursuit, and substitute, as the engine of improvement, devotion to moral education. Some believe, that a great union of the whole nations of the earth, under a Christian government, is to work out the destiny of humanity. Some, again, uphold that Christianity will introduce perfection in philosophy and then retire, leaving, to its successor, the consummation of the great work. Others look forward to the time, when both religion and philosophy will be superseded, and the Divinity will speak in the teachings of a “new-born band,” who are to lead the species, as a flock, to the pasture of perfection. Which system is to be realized, it is, at this moment, rather difficult to determine. Perhaps the soundest solution would be, to apply to all these dreamings, what a forgotten poet has said of the world—

“The world’s a wood, in which all lose their way,  
Though, by a diff’rent path, each goes astray!”

In all dissertations upon the Philosophy of History, the word "civilization" has lately grown much into vogue. It has been the subject of able treatises by able men. Among them, the lectures of M. Guizot, (partly translated into English) are pre-eminent, as specimens of admirable philosophical generalization. The word itself is a very attractive one, and, like most words which sound sensibly, and yet convey no definite idea—it is popular with the extensive circle, who look upon indefiniteness as "nine points" of philosophy. We hear of the civilization of the Greeks and the Romans—the Pagan—Christian—feudal—Northern—Southern civilization—lately we have had the Aztec civilization—the familiar sound of the word persuading us, all the while, that it conveys a very tangible notion, of what is, in reality, a very abstract matter. Finally, we are taught that all these civilizations (barring the Aztec, which, though a very important one, has but lately come into the field)—all have been gathered into one mighty river, the civilization of the nineteenth century! Thus concentrated, we learn that the waters are rushing and will continue to rush on, until they shall ultimately spread themselves as a great lake of perfection, no longer to know the tides of human infirmity!

This is all very poetical certainly, and agreeable likewise—for, besides being very simple and intelligible, it puts us in high conceit of our own times, and of ourselves. Nevertheless, it seems that doctors disagree, as to the application of their principles. M. Guizot contends that France is the focus of "civilization," because of the greatness of her "ideas." M. De Tocqueville, though quite ready to claim the same honor for his country, inveighs heartily against this propensity of the French, to discover some new "general and eternal laws" every morning, and, in the ardour of their generalization, "to compress the human race into the compass of an article!" The English, on their part, are apt to apply to the general and magnificent ideas of their philosophical neighbors, the most approved Anglo-Saxon expressions of polite contempt, and turn to arts and arms—the India House and the Bank of England—their dockyards and their colonies—parliament and the spinning-jenny—as

the triumphant evidences of their "civilization." Our patriotic philosophers here at home, are not backward in pointing to our free institutions, as establishing our own claim to be deemed, past all dispute, "the most enlightened nation under the sun."

In so unsettled a state of the controversy, it may be as well to enquire, what "civilization," in reality, is. Let us look at M. Guizot's definition—for his works are unquestionably the ablest, and furnish, besides, a large quota of the materials, openly borrowed or quietly stolen, which make up the philosophical capital of minor essayists on the subject.

He divides civilization into two elements;

1. The advancement of society, as distinguished from the improvement of the individuals who compose it.

2. The development, mentally and morally, of man, the individual.

With all deference to authority so deservedly distinguished, it does not seem to me that the two elements are capable of separation.

What is the object of human society? The moral, mental and physical welfare of its members. It can have no other end. Then society cannot be said to have fairly advanced, unless it has carried with it a corresponding advancement in the mental, moral and physical condition of its individuals. Society, being but a means, cannot have improved, unless it has gone on promoting its end. It follows, therefore, that M. Guizot's first element of civilization, *social progress*, merges in the second, which is, *individual progress*—and civilization may thus be defined to be—at any particular epoch—the state of mental, moral, and physical improvement, which a particular society, or mankind in general, at that epoch, presented. It will be observed that I have added *physical* improvement to the narrower definition of M. Guizot, which confines itself to mental and moral development. By this addition, I do not mean merely to include the progress of mankind, in any of those great plans and schemes which minister to wealth and power, and the physical greatness of empires. I refer to physical comfort, as an ingredient in human happiness—the physical comfort—protection—facility of

subsistence of individuals—the means of enjoying moderately and healthfully, the goods of life. This element of happiness, I contend, is as important a subject of enquiry, in ascertaining the civilization of any age or people, as are any of the intellectual or political triumphs, which may have graced its annals.

These things premised, let us see—as well as a rapid glance will allow us—how far the civilization of the nineteenth century deserves the magnificent estimate, which it is fashionable to put upon it.

In so far as knowledge—its diffusion and extent—are concerned, no sane man of course, will deny, that the human intellect has reached a point, the very dream of which, a century or two ago, would have been deemed, itself, insanity. The discoveries to which I before referred, as made by antiquarians and orientalists, of latter days—leave us, it is true, in doubt, whether we much surpass or indeed equal, in many points of profoundest science, the forgotten centuries whose annals they have been exploring. But let us yield this point, and concede that in knowledge—science—we are immeasurably beyond the past—and what will the concession prove? Is the degree of our approach to perfection, dependent on the amount of our knowledge? True, a popular author, Mr. Dick, has written a popular book called “The Philosophy of a Future State,” the principle of which is, that the happiness of a better world will be considerably affected by the extent of our acquisitions in this, and that consequently—as the same author argues in his book on the “Diffusion of Knowledge”—he who leaves this world with his mind most full, will have the start of his less fortunate fellow beings, in the other. As a consequence of this enlightened theory, the author gives a list of the studies which will be prosecuted in the life hereafter, among which mathematics, astronomy, natural philosophy, anatomy, and history are set down as most prominent. Such moon-struck fancies, however, only go to show the absurdity of the principle which we are resisting. Can the perfection of the human mind depend on what it knows of external facts or their laws? It is the mind itself, which is in question, not the range of objects which it com-

mands. It is the strength which is in the eagle-wing, to soar, and the keenness which is in the eagle-eye, to see, and not the multiplicity of things above which the one may rise, or which the other may command by its gaze. As Mr. Sewell forcibly has it, it "is power of mind, not accumulation of learning—faculties, not facts."

Can this our age, then—though the humblest and most ignorant among us know, what Socrates did not dream of—can this age, with all its knowledge, point to intellects which throw all past intelligences in the shade? Try them, man to man. Is an artisan of our day—with his cheap publications and newspapers, his respectable knowledge of science in its popular forms, his education much or little—superior, in what constitutes mental superiority, to the artisan, say of Greece or Rome, or of the sixteenth century? True, he knows more: he reads more: he knows much that Lord Bacon did not know. But is he nearer intellectual perfection? Are his faculties brighter? Does he think more infallibly? Is he nearer the image of his Maker? It would be hard to tell in what.

Take a scientific, educated, able man, of the nineteenth century—take the ablest. Measure him with Pythagoras, or Aristotle, or Bacon, or Leibnitz. Put out of the question what he knows—his mere acquisitions. Balance mind with mind—weigh faculty against faculty—greatness of intellect and the degrees of its perfection—will the nineteenth century bear off the palm? Is then the perfection of humanity, mentally, advanced in our civilization, granting all that truth requires us to yield to its multifarious knowledge? I confess I cannot see how. Nor, does the argument of the perfectionist find more to strengthen it, in the diffusion, than in the degree, of intellectual development. We must concede, it is true, the wonderful increase of cultivated men: but I am far from admitting that the number of great, original minds is larger than of yore. Yet, were I to grant their increase in number—denying, as I have denied, their advancement in degree—it would not, surely, follow from such concession, that a nearer approach of the species, to intellectual perfection, could be inferred. A thousand coursers might start

for the Olympic olive—but the speed of the victor, not the multitude of his rivals, though all were swift, would be the criterion of swiftness—the merit of the race. So too, with the race of intellect. All the inhabitants of the world, might, at this moment, be made as wise as Solomon, and yet humanity would not rise a degree, on that account, above the point of Solomon's elevation. The men might be sages; but, man would be no more god-like than before. Let us go farther.

In all that concerns the higher branches of human thought—those branches which approach the mighty problems of our spiritual nature, and our relation to the Being from whose essence our spirits are an emanation—has the present age done any thing to obliterate the efforts of genius two thousand years ago? What is there in the philosophy of this day, true or false, which is wholly original? Its Platonism and its Pantheism, and all its other isms—its very ideas of human perfectibility which we are resisting—what are they but the regeneration or the re-composition of systems or parts of systems, long since invented and buried? In all the sublimest philosophy which revelation has kindled into flame in our day—what is there that the early Christians did not hear or read, for their consolation and improvement, from the lips or in the works of the early fathers? In all the various creeds and systems which modern ingenuity has built upon the sacred writings, what creed or system is there, with which the theological subtlety of the early centuries did not perplex the faithful? How many of the most fashionable errors of our very day may not be traced to Roman, Grecian, Egyptian, even Indian origin? Every now and then, the hieroglyphical development of some unwrapped mummy, or the casually seen sculpture of some stone which a spade turns up, gives traces of our modern inventions, almost as far back as the flood.

Is it in our mental superiority, as displayed by our political institutions, that we have pride? Test the institutions of many ages of the past—not by the false criterion of an imaginary standard of excellence—but by their adaptation to the people and the times they were meant to govern, and perhaps Pythagoras and



Solon, Lycurgus and Justinian, Charlemagne, Alfonso and Alfred, may bid us pause, in the violence of our self-commendation.

Will the fine arts, do you think, afford matter of triumph to our perfectionists of the present time? Go to Elephanta and the Pyramids—the Temple of Ephesus—the Parthenon and the Coliseum! Look, in later times, to the Cathedrals of Strasbourg, and Milan, and Rheims, and the fairy magnificence of the Alhambra! Call up as witnesses, the shades of Appelles and Praxiteles—give life to the Venus de Medici and the Apollo Belvidere. Bid the genius of the nineteenth century outspan the dome of St. Peter's, or shed a ray of more divinity upon the Transfiguration of Raphael?

If poetry and the development of genius in that high sphere be made the test—we may satisfy ourselves with the simple question—how much nearer to perfection have we been carried, by the two centuries, which have rolled by since the death of Shakspeare?

But, forsaking the subject of intellectual progression—let us see whether the “civilization” of our day has brought, or is carrying us nearer perfection, in moral development. That the Christian revelation has been the parent of a new order of things, in the moral history of our race, is of course a fact, which demonstration forces upon the convictions even of the skeptical. That it conveys to us the sure and only rules, whereby our erring nature may reach the climax of excellence accorded to its weakness, is a truth, of acceptance equally universal. But Christianity, holding out to us no promises of terrestrial perfection—teaches no such doctrine as the onward, infinite progression of our race. It has, for man in the present century, no truths, which were not revealed to the men who listened to the Apostles. The civilization of this age, rich in the spoils and accumulations of the civilizations which swell its current, has added, and can add not one jot or tittle, to the doctrines whose ineffable sublimity broke forth, upon the solemn silence of the holy mount. Neither can natural ethics boast any new discoveries, in any state of civilization. They form a simple science—far easier to understand than follow—a science which involves no mystery,



and affords no scope to ingenuity or invention—which has been promulgated for centuries, and stands, as it then stood. If therefore the moral advancement of our age means any thing—it must refer to an improved appreciation—a steadier following—of the precepts of natural and revealed religion. To what remarkable extent then, has the nineteenth century taught its “civilization,” to avoid the vices of its erring predecessors?

Has it infused into the dealings of nations with each other, that feeling of brotherhood—that forgetfulness of self—which alone can gather them together, as children of their universal parent? Has this age known less than the centuries before it, of wars and rumors of wars? Has less of blood been poured upon the bosom of the earth—for frivolous or unworthy pretexts—for vain ambition—for empire—for oppression? Are armies and navies obsolete? Is war no science—bloodshed no business? Are the conquests of France in Africa, and of England in Asia—at this very moment—founded upon better or purer principles of morality, than those which guided Xerxes to Greece—the Carthaginian to Italy—the Roman to Gaul and Britain—the Arab to Spain?

What have governments—the representatives of national morality and intelligence—done, in our day, for the cause of morals among the governed? The statute-books—aye and of the freest governments, not omitting our own—may be found full of commercial regulations, and industrial laws, and all that can stimulate production. Enactments too are there, in abundance, to punish crime, and build prisons, and fill them—but where has there been a great national, statutory effort, to lay, on solid and permanent foundations, a system for crime’s prevention? What have the freest nations—France—England—the United States—the great competitors for the crown of civilization—what have they, with their “general ideas”—and wealth and empire—and free institutions—done, in the palpable matter of education—compared with what they have toiled and suffered to consummate, for trade and glory?—compared with what kingdoms of Europe relatively despotic, have done for the cultivation of their citizens?

Look then at the records of crime among individuals. The

ruder and more barbarous offences, such as uncultivated men committed, in their savageness, are of course less frequent—but still, our daily chronicles show us, that even in the bosoms of the most polished societies, crimes are for ever bursting out, which appal us by their horrors. But putting these aside, and passing over too, the dark records of grosser vices—have not the refinements of society brought, with them, corresponding refinements of guilt? Instead of highway robbery, marauding and black-mail—the breach of faith and trust, public and private, has sprung into existence—criminal bankruptcy—swindling—fraud—deceit—in all the multiplied forms which the combinations of social dealing may suggest! Commerce alas! the concomitant—almost the parent of modern “civilization”—how feeble the tribute to its morality, which the candid historian must pay! Along with its splendid enterprise—its wealth—its luxuries and magnificence—its spread of knowledge—its wide grasp of human development—how have avarice and selfishness, national and individual, gone hand in hand! How has it tended ever, to make the merchant subordinate to the wares in which he deals—to stimulate the rivalry of classes and nations, into hatred and war—to degrade the operative into a mere machine—to make of human life and labor, and the best exercise of human faculties, things to be bought and sold and played with—as the system or the mighty game might chance to require!

And here we fall, insensibly—for all these things have intimate connexion—into the further reflection, how far the happiness of man—and involved in the question of happiness—how far his physical welfare, has been improved by the progress, of which the age is so boastful. Any one who pauses only to compare the refinements and appliances of modern life, with the roughness and rudeness of the best of times past, will go far to conclude, at first sight, that there is hardly room for the form of a parallel. But the first view is, here, as it generally is—deceptive altogether. We see around us provisions for almost every indulgence, which ingenuity can conceive, or stimulated appetite enjoy. Yet let us not forget that this very progress of gratification begets a parallel progress of desire, and that our cravings are ever in advance of the means of their satisfaction.

New provisions create new wants. What to-day was content with, will give no contentment to-morrow, and the man of to-morrow, with his additional appliances, will be as far from his goal as the man of to-day; for, though he has advanced in means, his standard has advanced with him, and all human things are relative. Even his bodily frame, increasing in sensibility, must increase in refinement, so that the high gratification of the man of this century may not be relatively higher, than to the man of the past, with his coarser fibre, was the coarse enjoyment which made up his maximum of gratification. An able medical writer has recently produced a work, expressly devoted to "a consideration of the changes produced by civilization, upon the nervous system," wherein he sustains the position, that advancing civilization provides "a finer, and gradually more abundant endowment of the purely nervous tissues, amongst the constituent elements of human physiology." To this doctrine, may be added, in corroboration, the wonderful increase (out of all ratio, with increased population) of diseases of the nerves and brain, and disorders of the mind following thereupon—a circumstance which has attracted much attention of late, and which is surely an item of no trifling consideration in a view of our progress towards perfection.

But even this very equivocal sort of physical improvement is far from being extended to the masses, and still farther from being permanent with any class. All old and thickly settled countries, even the most civilized, are remarkable for their startling contrasts of splendor and misery. National greatness is no security against individual starvation. Of this the present situation of Great Britain is a demonstration, painfully eloquent. The crowded workshops, and their squalid denizens,—pauperism increasing in a ratio larger than that of the increasing population,—the reduction of the actual necessities of life into a smaller circle, and the increased severity of the toil required to obtain even those—all these things bear directly on our subject, but I have space only to allude to them. Fortunately our own position, as a new people, relieves us from the pain of an immediate application of them to ourselves. We flatter ourselves

that we are freed from the chance of ever knowing them experimentally, by our peculiar institutions. Long be the day of our disenchantment postponed!

But, besides the palpable effects of social progression upon the physical comfort of the masses, there are other evils—less conspicuous, but not less real—which result from the vast extent of commerce, and the multiplication of systems for the accumulation of wealth. The eagerness for gain, stimulating men from the quiet walks of legitimate trade, to chase the rainbow-tinted bubbles of speculation—gambling, in a word—to what fluctuations of fortune, and to what consequent misery has it not been the parent? The whole system of imaginary funds and capital—putting aside the blasting demoralization it has begotten—how has it gone over individual prosperity, and domestic competence and happiness, like the cloud of sand over the wealth of the caravan! Legislation, too,—bending before every breath of changing theory to which popular fancy or interest may have chosen to play the *Æolus*—how often has it, in our time, made beggars of the wealthy, and outcasts of the humbly independent?

It is then a bold proposition, to say, that because nations are great, and prosperous, and wise, their people are, therefore, happy, or high in their moral standard. I am as far removed as any one, from the absurd belief, that happiness and moral excellence are necessarily attendant upon the ruder stages of society, or that a complicated and advanced social system drives them, of necessity, to groves and sheepwalks. I only mean to say, that a brilliant, ostensible, social progression may be accompanied by a low stage of individual welfare, physical and moral. I have proven, I think, that the “civilization” of the nineteenth century, is a sad exemplification of this sad truth. “Will,” says Carlyle, “the whole finance ministers, and upholsterers, and confectioners of modern Europe, undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one shoe-black happy?” With some probability of success, I think they may. Governments may provide a thousand means for the improvement of his mind and heart; or, if they are content to do less, they may increase

his facilities for the enjoyment of physical existence, in humble comfort, and even this, to the shoe-black, who is not likely to be very transcendental, may be no small item of actual felicity. With the capacity to do even thus much for their meanest citizens or subjects, governments are false to duty while they neglect it, let their rank in "civilization" be what it may.

We are led away and deceived, by the glittering semblances and high sounding names of things. We speak of the feudal times, with shuddering, and the dark ages with enlightened contempt, but, is the nation of this day, in its intercourse with sister nations, animated by principles more holy, than those which governed the relations between feudal sovereigns? More wise they may be, I grant, but not more pure. Was the feudal vassal of the middle ages altogether miserable and degraded, because of the chain of fealty which bound him to do service, even with his blood? Did he throw away his happiness and his moral worth, when he flung himself into the strife of bills and bows? In the tie which bound the long-descended vassal to his long-descended lord, there was something of self-devotion, of affection, which made the foray a labor of love, and death in the battle-field, a willing martyrdom, at the shrine of reverence and duty. The artisan of the same times, a member of his guild or corporation, united, in brotherhood and interest, with those who plied the same art, was he to be pitied, because his unenlightened mind knew not those laws of political economy, which have since pronounced his guild a folly, a monopoly, a nuisance? Has he profited much by the change, which has brought down his pride, from independence as a burgher, to pauperism as an operative—which has set him adrift, alone, in the wide world of labor, with rules of scientific selfishness for over-reaching his neighbor, if he can? The Chinese was surely as happy and as good, centuries ago, in the persuasion of his own unapproachable wisdom and unfathomable antiquity, as he will be a century hence, when long wars and slaughter shall have made him a British subject, and taught him the wonders of Anglo-Saxon civilization!

The enlightened spirit of modern Europe, discards, as frivo-

lous, the taste for rural and public pleasures—for festivals and ceremonial—for all those pleasant observances, social though national, which in earlier times made up so large an element of popular enjoyment. Has the human mind or heart, think you, gone nearer to perfection, in attribute or impulse, because a cold policy has thus devoted to selfish and gainful purposes, the few hours, once sacred to a general renewal of the kindly sympathies of life?

Has the tendency of governments, and of society—themselves to monopolize or control the duties and opinions, once left to individual observance and regulation—added any thing to the development of individual character? Take, for example, as to governments, the duty of succoring and maintaining the poor, once a charge on private charity, now a matter of state administration. Grant, if you please—what the statistics of British poor laws do, however, most glaringly contradict—grant that this assumption by government, to be the people's almoner, has given effective and salutary system to the discharge of this sacred obligation. But, do you think that it has tended to elevate and purify the moral tone of individuals, by converting the offering of the heart, into an item in the detested tax-bill?

Then again, as to the interference of society with individual thought and action. Has the introduction of the principle of association in moral reforms, not tended to substitute enthusiasm for virtue, and to weaken the surer reliance of man, on the working of a nobler principle or a diviner agency, in his own heart? Has not the substitution of a vast, irregular, irresponsible public opinion, for the dictates of individual conscience, had the effect of making men slaves—even where government is most free—to a despotism which they despise, for its frequent absurdity and worthlessness, but which they cannot brave, because its power is irresistible?

So much, then, for the effect of "civilization" on the moral, as well as the physical welfare of our race. The views which I have sketched, thus rapidly, form but a small segment of the wide field which the subject before us covers. Limited, too, as has been the sphere of my examination, I have been compelled,



by a regard for your patience, to give it a character, at best but superficial. I pretend to nothing more ; but, I trust, I have said enough, to convince you that the popular notion of " progress " is delusive in a high degree, and based upon principles of delusion.

The scheme of Providence, so far as human eyes may read it, is one, which, on the whole, has varied but little, in the range of time. Instead of presenting us a career, which, with perfection before it, has not ceased to go forward, it has made manifest to us a sum of virtues and vices, advantages and disadvantages, powers and weaknesses, so balanced against each other, so fairly, and, on the whole, so equally mingled, that one century has had but little right to boast of more peculiar favors than its fellows. " Civilization " has brought, with its increased blessings, increase of woes, and all history seems to disclose an analogy in the life of generations, to the life of individual men, in this, at any rate, that, in spite of striking contrasts, there is more equality of lot, than human repining is willing to allow. Appearances, pretensions, may delude, names may deceive, theories lead astray, but, on the whole, it may be said with justice of human destiny, as Richelieu has it of individual happiness :

" Through plots,  
And counterplots, mid glory and disgrace,  
Along the plains, where passionate discord rears  
Eternal Babel, still the holy stream  
\* \* \* \* \* glides on : "

its level but little varying, its volume ever near the same !

I should serve but ill, the purposes for which public lectures were intended, were I to pause, after showing the errors of a system, and leave its evil consequences altogether unnoticed. The tendency of the fashionable doctrine of progress is as pernicious, as the doctrine itself is false. It is two-fold ; it leads to fatalism, or to blind, revolutionary radicalism.

So long as men are content to rest upon the ordinary principle, that measures, wisely and virtuously planned and executed, will, under Providence, result in benefit, happiness, improvement—in other words, that good seed will spring up to good fruit, there



can be no danger but that good seed will be sown, and good fruit, of course, be gathered. Opinions and conduct will be weighed, with a sole regard to their worth and their justice, and men will not hold, that their duty to the future implies forgetfulness of the past, or contempt for its lessons. But, let it once be understood and believed—that a constant current is bearing our race, onward, from weakness to strength, from frailty to virtue, from imperfection to perfection—that the occurrences which, to human eyes, seem contradictions to such a theory, are but as eddies, where some slight portions of the torrent, for a moment pause or retrograde, while the main stream rolls, irresistibly and ever on—and an end is, from that moment, put to all sound appreciation of individual and national principle and action, to all worthy, and wise, and energetic effort, for individual and social good. Fatalism—faith in destiny—becomes the ruling principle of thought and conduct. Why should we toil with brain or sinew, if all things will, in the end, be well, whether we toil or not? Thus will men regulate their actions. Their opinions will all be graduated according to the simple scale, that “whatever is, is right.”

It is told, as an amusing instance of the folly which nations commit, in attempting to force their institutions upon conquered or dependent countries, that a British official, some time since, in India, called together a coroner’s jury of natives, in order to hold his inquest over the body of a devotee, who had drowned himself in the Ganges. The jury were all sworn, the testimony was heard, in due and solemn form, and the verdict was demanded. True to the fatalism which their religion teaches, the whole panel, unanimously, answered, “He died, because his time had come!”

Now, precisely such is the verdict, which the historians and philosophers of progress pass, upon the deeds and fortunes of men and nations. Success, is evidence of a cause which deserved success—defeat, of one which was ordained to fall! “We must,” says Cousin, “be on the side of the victor, for his is always the better cause; it is the cause of civilization and of humanity, of the present and the future, while the cause of the vanquished party, is always that of the past.” And again, “we

ever find, on reflection, that the vanquished ought to have been vanquished!" "Every revolution," says Jouffroy, "is a step in the discovery of goodness and truth."

A mighty revolution, such as that of France, is consummated. Blood is poured out like rain. The foundations of society are levelled. The furies of war, with their serpents, are let loose upon the civilized world. Europe trembles, and, for a moment, totters: at last, quiet succeeds to storm, and then, there is not wanting a philosophic historian, like a Thiers, to demonstrate, that all the sickening detail of carnage, and rapine, and demoralization, was a part of the great programme, according to which humanity was to be carried a step nearer to perfection. The ancient institutions of France were worn out. They would serve no longer. The ancient fabric of society had grown threadbare. The ancient rulers were no longer fit to rule. Their time had come! and therefore it was entirely within the range of necessity, nay, of propriety, that they should be gotten rid of, in some way, no matter how. The French revolution happened, therefore it was fated to happen. It triumphed, therefore it was right! It developed goodness and truth!

A mighty continent—our own, for example—is inhabited by savage tribes. It is rich in the treasures of nature—glories in variety of climate, in beauty and excellence, in valley, lake, and hill. Two centuries pass, and a great empire is spread over its surface—but the savage exists no longer. The historian of progress teaches us, that, as Anglo-Saxon energy built up this great republic, of course this continent was meant as a new theatre for Anglo-Saxon greatness. The Indian might have been civilized, but it was more convenient to make way with him. He perished, therefore it was right for him to perish. He was but a victim to philosophical necessity.

In our own day, a great empire—China, for instance—refuses any but a limited intercourse with other nations. On ordinary principles, this would seem to be her undoubted right. But—says the philosopher of progress, ever on the side of ambition—it is the destiny of nations to be civilized: no nation has a right to refuse this boon. China resists her destiny. Therefore it is right to storm, burn, shoot, persecute, destroy. Civilization

has manufactured goods, rotting in her warehouses, which somebody must pay for. China can, but will not. Civilization will be retarded, if production be arrested by default of consumption. Therefore China has no right to decline consuming. She must learn the force of compulsion. Her old system is behind the lights of the age. Its time has come. And so, by a simple process, the crying outrage perpetrated on this singular people, by the British arms, is, with the utmost facility, converted into a glorious triumph of human progress—a subject not merely of palliation, but jubilee! If I mistake not, one of our own most eminent citizens has, in a public discourse, sustained this doctrine.

It would be superfluous for me to show you, in similar detail, how this same principle will apply itself to the internal doings of nations. With its establishment, all just notions of right and wrong must perish. One of two things will inevitably follow. Either the people will resign themselves, ingloriously, to the chances which may await them, relying upon destiny to set all things right at last: or they will consult expediency as the only oracle, and regard success as the only criterion, of truth and justice. How long the most prosperous national condition can survive such a state of things, the history of the past may show to us; and common reason, of itself, would be able, readily, to divine.

But it is not merely the principle of fatalism, and its demoralizing influences, which we have to fear from the doctrine of perfectibility. Let a people persuade themselves, or be persuaded, that the future is to be, of necessity, an improvement on the past—that, by consequence, they can only reach the excellence of the future, by discarding what the past has bequeathed to them—and it is easy to see that every tendency will be towards change, whether wise or foolish—change, for change's sake.

The profoundest observer and commentator upon the institutions of our country and their tendency, M. De Tocqueville, has proven, with very great clearness, that the principle of democracy—which allows self-improvement, indeed stimulates every man to it—necessarily superinduces a disposition, on the

part of all men, to consider the sphere of their capacity for improvement, their perfectibility, almost indefinite. Among such a people as ourselves, then—thus prone, from the democratic character of our institutions, to restlessness and change—it is clear that the additional stimulus of a philosophic system, which teaches perfectibility as a dogma, must be peculiarly dangerous. The indisposition to be stationary, the impulse to do something, to go on, to alter, at all hazards, must become almost irresistible. Under such stimulus, permanence must become a thing impossible.

Thus is it, that even now, we find ourselves unwilling, by law or social organization, to bind ourselves to any fixed policy or principle. We look to the future, as necessarily containing within itself, some new developments, whereof the past had no idea, and whereunto the present affords no clue. We are indisposed, therefore, to lay the foundation of any thing permanent, believing that there is something better to come, which will entirely supersede the best conceptions of the present.

Like all other general and abstract principles, adopted by masses as their rules of conduct, this principle of progress, thus established, tends visibly towards fanaticism. Its hopes and aspirations, the enthusiastic sentiments by which it animates and sustains them, grow to make up the mighty volume of public opinion. Once linked with the despotic power which public opinion, in democratic countries, has never failed to exercise, it pronounces its anathemas of extermination, against all who would attempt to resist the spirit of the age. For the past, and its hoary truths and tried institutions, this fanaticism has no mercy. What it denominates established error, must perish at every hazard, peaceably or forcibly. If it does not fall, like the walls of Jericho, at the sound of the reformer's horn, it must be stormed, as the Mussulman monarch overthrew Constantinople, with lighted torches at the extremities of cimeter and lance. Accompanying its illumination, nay bound to its very torch, is its weapon: and the enemy must take the light, at the point of the steel. Laying it down as a maxim not to be questioned, that reform must follow revolution—identifying improvement with change—it gives the rein to the wildest sans-culottism, and annihilates

every thing like national or individual repose. It drives the statesman from his half concocted plans of permanent polity, into the struggle for popularity and ephemeral applause—into shifting and time-serving legislation. It snatches the student from communion with the wisdom of the dead, into the arena of excitement and controversy. It substitutes for the earnest and calm inquiry into political, moral, and social truth, the hurried disquisition, the superficial pamphlet, the plausible system. It stimulates to a wide range of superficial acquirement, which may give fluency and plausibility on all points, profundity and grave knowledge upon none. It sees, from the history of past legislation, that men have been left too little to themselves, and it rushes to the conclusion that all government is an evil, and that men will be nearest to perfection, when left to themselves altogether. A rational adherence to systems proven good by experience, is denominated an obstinate adherence to prejudices. The lessons even of the very present, it treats as stones rolled in the path of the future. Being fanatical, full of absolutism in its doctrines, it is of course rabid in its spirit of propagandism. Instead of leaving every man to fill his appropriate sphere of usefulness in the discharge of his duties as an individual and a citizen, it talks of this and that man's "mission" to humanity, and sets all its disciples to teaching, instead of learning and acting. Hence the abundance of philosophers in our day, all with some "mission" or other to fulfil, and all, in some way or other, prepared to hasten the certain progress of our race to a terrestrial millenium, where metaphysics will constitute felicity. Each one of these remodellers of the world, feels that he stands upon an intellectual and moral eminence, the impersonation of Tennyson's poet—

"When rites and forms, before his burning eyes,  
Melted like snow!"

It needs then no vision of peculiar clearness, to see that a system, with such tendencies, demands not only denunciation, but an antidote. Not inenthusiastic, wild anticipations, but in grave, and careful, and deliberate deductions, will the philosophy of true progress find its realization. Not he who flings up his cap, and cheers the spirit of the age, as through wrong, over right, it

speeds, like Mazeppa's courser, its irresistible way, careless where it travels, so it but travel on—not he is the minister at the altar of sound morals or philosophy. The true political philosopher, is he who strives to discover what is good, and to hold fast to it when it has been found. To him, the march of society is not as a mighty pageant, of which he judges, as the vulgar spectator may judge a passing army, by its flaunting banners, its music, its glitter, its array! He knows the weakness of his species, as familiarly as he knows its strength. His faith is not in man merely, nor in a high imaginary destiny. He knows that man may be wise and good without being perfect, and he contents himself with realizing what can be realized, rather than dreaming what may be dreamed. While the political or moral alchemist is wasting life and toil, in search of an impossible secret, he is satisfied with humbler aims. He is happy in devoting his labor to simpler ends—pleased to accomplish something, though but little, rather than grasp at infinity and clutch the air. For him, the spirit of the age is not merely the downward or onward rushing of a blind tendency. It is the balanced movement of opposing forces; safe, because checked on every side. It is the wisdom of the past, spoken from the lips of the present—whispered in the ear of the future. Looking forward to the improvement of his race within the limits of its frailty, his faith regards it, not as the irresistible whirling of a maelstrom, into which every thing is to be drawn, but as nothing more than an effect, following a combination of causes, dependent on those causes altogether, and on the Providence that rules them. “No man,” says Mr. Carlyle, “ever became a hero in his sleep.” No nation, it may with equal truth be averred, ever became happy, or great, or justly glorious, through rash radicalism, or blind and vicious fatalism, or in any mode, other than by the unwearied application of appropriate human means. Faith in a people, must arise from something intrinsic in their character and their principles—hope for their future fortune, must spring from faith well founded. Upon what can the faith and hope of man, in any people, repose, unless it be on their ability and willingness to frame the elements of permanence—their readiness to rest upon them, when once they have been framed? What boots



it to a man, that he has lived, if his life has been but the chase of a child after its butterfly—a pursuit after something which has never been found? What has a nation gained from half a century, or twenty centuries of existence, if, like a wandering savage tribe, it has demolished on each morning, the temporary hut, beneath which it rested the night before, and has no remembrance or relic of its journey, save the fatigue of the travel? National life is worth nothing, save for its experiences and their application. A wise philosopher has said that “a country of yesterday has no to-morrow.” His commentator has improved the saying, by the paraphrase—“there is no future, for a people who have no past.”

Upon these maxims, I am willing to rest the moral of the wandering discourse to which it has pleased you to listen. That there is, for this land of ours, an opportunity of moving in a glorious sphere of national development, the simplest, least enthusiastic observation will unquestionably teach us. But that an honorable destiny is to come upon us, like a thief in the night—that it is a destiny, which no effort or instrumentality of ours is needful to consummate, which no misconduct of ours can retard, or even wholly avert—it is the climax of absurdity to dream. All the poets whom the muses ever crowned, might sing the promise of our national futurity, until the Alleghanies should rival Helicon; yet not one blessing, which their rhapsodies might announce, would come upon us, until head, and hand, and heart, should have labored, faithfully, to secure it. All the enthusiasts, who ever gave form to the shadows that came up to them through the ivory gate of waking sleep, might preach of progress until their “missions” were worn out, and all the world a-weary, yet never would prophecy draw on fulfilment, or improvement come, till something should be done to bring it. The present is parent to the future, as “the child is father of the man”—and to secure the future’s destiny, provision must be made to shape the action of the present, after the lessons of the past.

In an aristocratic or monarchical government, the political philosopher, seeing that the tendency is to adhere with rigour to the past, will advocate, most probably, the adoption of counteracting principles—hoping that the resultant force will



pass through the happy medium. When, on the contrary, he finds principles and action ever prone to break up the conservative elements of society, it will be his effort to cast his anchor out upon some firm spot, and thus hold up against the tempest. Instead of feeding his fancy with indefinite notions of a perfection, which is sure to fall on us, no one knows when, or how, or why, he will pause gravely, to examine, to weigh, to regulate realities. He will not trust to the stars, till he has done something to realize the augury of the "shining sybils." To counteract an endless and bootless yearning for the future, he will endeavour to extract all that is good, and great, and useful, from the past—to throw some bread of permanence upon the waters of change and progress, that he may look for its return after many days. Laws and constitutions he will not regard as capable of working miracles, merely by their adoption and enactment. Free legislation, he will not proclaim to be, of necessity, wise legislation. Public opinion he will not bow to, as the incarnation of truth. Change he will not hallow, because it is clamoured for. Not in names, but in things, will his confidence rest and his power. He will not squabble for the abstract meaning of a governmental provision, while its essence fleets away, nor, like Mr. Clutterbuck, lose his time in straightening a crooked nail in his wine cask, while the generous liquid is wasted through the opening. He will not deem that every narrowness, and bitterness, and weakness of practical administration, is atoned for, by a boundless theoretical expansion of wisdom, love and promise. He will eschew fatalism as folly, and the extremity of radicalism he will denounce as something worse. His effort will be to build up, not to pull down. His philosophy will be of deeds, not of words. He will busy himself, more with the good of individuals, than the destinies of the species. He will not hang the silent harp of human sympathy upon the willows of an abstract principle, nor devote himself to solving the problems of humanity at large, while the welfare of his fellow beings in particular, lies all unheeded. In the present, he will strive to found something for the aggregations of the future to cling to, so that each generation may add its contribution to the mass—so that additional strength and permanence may grow, as, in the world of matter, chrystal forms itself on chrystal, and stratum builds itself on stratum.

Let such be the moral drawn, for the men of our country, from the philosophy of history. Faith, in her destiny, will then rest on something more substantial than fancy. Hope will be firm, on something less evanescent than the rainbow.

Wallis, S. Teackle  
Letter of Mr. S. Teackle  
Wallis

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